



# Environmental Fact Sheet

## EPA Issues Final Rule Regarding Liquids in Hazardous Waste Landfills

### Background

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976 directed EPA to develop and implement a program to protect human health and the environment from improper hazardous waste management practices. The program is designed to control the management of hazardous waste from its generation to its ultimate disposal--from cradle-to-grave. In 1984, the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments (HSWA) to RCRA were signed into law, mandating even more stringent requirements and expanding the scope of EPA's hazardous waste regulatory program.

One of the requirements of HSWA was that EPA issue final regulations that (1) "minimize the disposal of containerized liquid hazardous waste in landfills," (2) "minimize the presence of free liquids in containerized hazardous waste to be disposed of in landfills," and (3) "prohibit the disposal in landfills of liquids that have been absorbed in materials that biodegrade or that release liquids when compressed as might occur during routine landfill operations."

On April 30, 1985, EPA issued a final rule requiring use of the Paint Filter Liquids Test (PFT) to determine the presence of free liquids in either bulk or containerized waste. On December 24, 1986, EPA proposed a rule addressing the biodegradation and compressibility of sorbed liquid wastes in containers. On June 24, 1987, October 29, 1991, and May 1, 1992, EPA issued supplemental notices regarding the December 24, 1986 proposal.

### Sorbents, Adsorbents and Absorbents: What's the Difference?

As described in EPA's rule-makings, "adsorbents" are materials that retain liquids *on the surface of their particles by capillary action and surface tension*. "Absorbents", mean-while retain liquids *within their molecular structure*. This Fact Sheet and the rule itself use the term sorbent or "sorb" to refer to materials that are used to treat free liquids that are either adsorbents or absorbents, or both.



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